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ABSTRACT

The paucity of skilled and knowledgeable leadership personnel for postsecondary learning disability programs is a critical limitation to the development of this area of special education. This manuscript delineates competencies needed for leadership personnel and describes a preservice and an inservice training program. The preservice program is the University of Connecticut's learning disability college doctoral training program. A listing of required coursework is included. The inservice program is Connecticut's Learning Disability College Consortium which provides comprehensive technical assistance to postsecondary institutions throughout the state. Sixty-two competencies in the following areas are listed: assessment skills, affective interventions, cognitive interventions, instructional skills and techniques, counseling/consultation skills, research skills and management/leadership skills. (Author/DB)

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TRAINING LEADERSHIP PERSONNEL FOR LEARNING DISABILITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS: PRESERVICE AND INSERVICE MODELS

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TRAINING LEADERSHIP PERSONNEL FOR LEARNING DISABILITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS: PRESERVICE AND INSERVICE MODELS

ABSTRACT

The paucity of skilled and knowledgeable leadership personnel for postsecondary learning disability programs is a critical limitation to the development of this area of special education. This manuscript delineates the competencies needed for leadership personnel in this field and describes a preservice and an inservice training program. The preservice program is the University of Connecticut's learning disability college doctoral training program. The inservice program is Connecticut's Learning Disability College Consortium which provides comprehensive technical assistance to postsecondary institutions throughout the state.

TRAINING LEADERSHIP PERSONNEL FOR LEARNING DISABILITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS: PRESERVICE AND INSERVICE MODELS

Given that the number of learning disabled college freshmen has increased tenfold since 1978 (Learning Disability Update, 1986), the profession should consider programming for learning disabled (LD) students a "growth industry" which, in fact, may be heading for "bankruptcy".

As there are close to two million learning disabled students currently receiving services in the nation's public schools (Eighth Annual Report, 1986) and more than half of them are expected to seek postsecondary training (White, et al., 1982), the need for college support programs is evident. Program development has also been encouraged by federal and state legislation and fiscal support (Shaw & Norlander, 1986), as well as by the growing number of students seeking college admission. There is concern, however, that many of these "so-called" programs do not meet the needs of postsecondary learning disabled students (Mangrum & Strichart, 1984).

The fact that in many instances secondary programming for the learning disabled is poorly planned and inappropriate is well documented (Johnston, 1984; U.S. Congress, Education of the Handicapped Amendments, 1983) with the shortage of qualified direct service personnel noted as the major impediment to improvement (Smith-Davis, Burke, & Noel,

1984). A position paper by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1985) indicates that appropriate programming for "adults with learning disabilities is predicated on a clear understanding of how their condition influences their learning and performance" (p. 2). Unfortunately, at the postsecondary level, not even administrative personnel have such a "clear understanding". This problem is evident in that only 9% of college disabled student services personnel who generally have the responsibility to develop and administer these programs are trained in special education (Blosser, 1984). Blosser also indicates that training regarding learning disabilities is acknowledged to be a major inservice need of this population. Numbers of professionals have noted that L.D. college leadership personnel often lack relevant experience, training, or skill to fulfill the many responsibilities associated with implementing these programs (Shaw & Norlander, 1986). There clearly appears to be an overall lack in the knowledge base regarding adults with learning disabilities. This lack cuts across a number of areas including identification, diagnosis, prescription, program planning and selection and presents major obstacles to effectively serving this population. Johnston (1984) stresses the need to address these issues ". . . if this area of special education is to evolve into a mature, respectable

discipline." (p. 390). This paper will describe approaches designed to rectify the current situation through the development of both preservice and inservice training models for learning disability leadership personnel.

Competencies

One must begin with the understanding that although elementary and secondary support programs for the learning disabled are the responsibility of special educators, that is rarely the case at the postsecondary level. Personnel from counseling, higher education administration, rehabilitative counseling, social work, psychology, and speech usually have primary responsibility at the college level. It is, therefore, not surprising that there is an urgent call for the development of curricula focused on the needs of learning disabled adults to be incorporated into training programs in all these disciplines (National Joint Committee, 1985). Given the divergent skills and experiences of personnel in this field, training efforts typically deal with practitioners skilled in <u>one</u> area (instruction, assessment, administration, or counseling) who lack even basic skills in other critical competencies.

The heterogeneity of the adult learning disabled population also suggests that leadership personnel will require a wide range of knowledge and skills to develop and

implement programs to meet individual needs. The abilities to identify learner needs, develop student skills in learning, provide remedial and compensatory instruction in skill areas, implement tutorial support in subject areas, provide appropriate learning accommodations and develop an array of social, emotional, and career supports are critical to meeting the needs of postsecondary learning disabled students. Competencies will be required in the area of training and supervising personnel in implementing these skills as well as providing direct service to students.

Although we have previously indicated our preference for comprehensive learning disability support programs with trained personnel available to do diagnosis, instruction, and provide accommodations (McGuire & Shaw, 1986; Shaw & Norlander, 1985; Shaw & McGuire, 1986), this preferred model will not always be the case. Therefore, in some institutions leadership personnel will not need skill in administering tests and writing evaluations but rather must be adept in identifying appropriate evaluation needs and interpreting reports. Similarly, support programs which only provide accommodations (such as exam modifications and note takers) but not direct instruction would require personnel with a limited array of diagnostic and learning intervention competencies.

Given the caveats described above, Table 1 lists

projected competencies for leadership personnel of L.D. college programs (Norlander, Shaw, & Czajkowski, 1986). These competencies have been developed based upon a review of the literature on postsecondary L.D. programming, a task analysis of the roles and responsibilities of L.D. college administrators at two and four year institutions, and feedback from directors of exemplary programs across the country. The competencies are "projected" in that the authors are currently conducting a national needs assessment to review and evaluate the current and desired competencies of L.D. college leadership personnel.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Training

Preservice Training

The University of Connecticut has developed a doctoral program to train leadership personnel for learning disability college programs. This preservice training initiative, funded by the Office of Special Education's Division of Personnel Preparation, is the only effort of its kind in the country. There are currently five full-time graduate students and one part-time student in training.

Graduate students in this area can enroll in doctoral

programs in special education, school psychology, educational psychology, or higher education. They are typically experienced and usually certified or licensed special educators, school psychologists, or counselors. Given the diversity of entering skills and experience, the emphasis in each student's coursework varies. For example, someone without teaching experience with the learning disabled would take a number of learning disability and assessment courses already completed by a candidate with a Master's in special education. On the other hand, the program for a student with a counseling background would not include basic coursework in social/emotional and counseling areas which in many instances would be required for a special educator. A plan of study usually incorporates thirty-six to fifty-four credits in areas of assessment, learning disabilities, academic/ cognitive, and emotional problems, counseling/consultation, administration in higher education and research/evaluation/ technology. An outline of typical courses in each area is presented in Table 2. This program is significantly different from other training programs given the cross disciplinary training in special education, counseling, and school psychology, the focus on adults rather than children and the training in higher education rather than public school administration.

Insert Table 2 about here.

Critical elements in the coursework are the L.D. college leadership seminars. The focus of the initial seminar is on theory and practice related to the provision of direct service to postsecondary learning disabled students. Participants have an opportunity to review and discuss literature on adult learning, L.D. college programming, approaches to instruction, social interventions, and diagnosis. Subsequent seminars deal with leadership issues, research options, and related problems including services for students with traumatic head injuries, course waivers, remediation versus compensation, program evaluation, social skills interventions and the efficacy of content tutoring. These discussions often begin with a literature review, result in a plan of action for program implementation and/or the specification of research hypotheses which may form the basis for student research and dissertation.

Each graduate student in the program is involved in 150 to 300 hours of supervised practicum or internship each semester. Beginning students are typically involved in the direct service component of the L.D. college program. They might function as a case manager (learning specialist) implementing and coordinating support services for individual

students, completing diagnostic evaluations, counseling students or directing a peer support group. Advanced students share responsibility for project administration including advising prospective students, conducting intake interviews, supervising staff and coordinating general program management. Additionally, these graduate students work with faculty conducting research, training new learning specialists and providing technical assistance for other postsecondary programs.

The final outcome of this training program is the ability of program graduates to take leadership positions in postsecondary learning disability programs. Ultimately this goal should have a positive impact on national efforts to enhance programming options through direct service, research, and training. In the short term, the linkage between training efforts and supervised fieldwork in a broad range of activities provides an opportunity for assessment of all student competencies prior to graduation.

Inservice Training

Inservice training and technical assistance for personnel must be a principle means for enhancing the provision of services to the postsecondary learning disabilities population (National Joint Committee, 1985). The Associate Editor of the Journal of Learning Disabilities after

attending a regional L.D. college conference, noted that "few persons there knew anything about learning disabilities" and "if college level programs are based upon the misinformation of the type I heard . . . little success can be expected." (Chandler, 1985, p. 498). In order to overcome this problem, the State of Connecticut has created a vehicle for enhancing the quantity and quality of postsecondary learning disability programs in public and private institutions.

The Connecticut L.D. College Consortium was developed based upon the success of two model direct service programs at Housatonic Community College and the University of Connecticut. These programs demonstrated the efficacy of such specialized student support services at both two and four year colleges. The evaluation of the programs (McGuire, 1986) indicated that during the last semester students in each school achieved a mean grade point average of almost 2.7 (B-) and approximately 90% were eligible to return to school the following year.

The Connecticut Consortium represents a joint effort of the Department of Higher Education which requested State funding and the two postsecondary institutions which are providing the technical assistance to participating institutions. The consortium model is intended to promote cooperative arrangements between institutions in order to maximize the use of existing resources, develop a cost

effective approach for each institution, and enhance the ability of colleges in every region of the state to meet the needs of the growing number of learning disabled students enrolling on campuses across the state.

The purpose of the Consortium is to provide technical assistance concerning the following:

1. Legal implications of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act;
2. Admissions and intake procedures;
3. Diagnosis and assessment of adults with learning disabilities;
4. Programming and counseling;
5. Service delivery;
6. Record keeping to document services and results;
7. Financial considerations;
8. Evaluation of program efforts;
9. Awareness and inservice for faculty and staff; and
10. Ongoing cooperative arrangements with other consortium members. (Administrative Considerations, 1986, p. 10)

The Consortium efforts began with a series of workshops for higher education personnel in every college, public and private, in the State. The letter of invitation from the Commissioner of Higher Education resulted in teams of administrators from 20 colleges (42.5% of Connecticut postsecondary institutions were represented) attending the workshops. The initial workshop was designed for high level administrative personnel (President, Director of Academic Affairs, Dean of Students, etc.) regarding their roles in fostering administrative support for L.D. college programming at their institution. The second workshop dealt with

assisting mid-level managers (representatives from admissions, counseling, disabled student services, learning center, etc.) to develop policies and procedures to enhance the institution's ability to serve the learning disabled. The third workshop provided direct service personnel with an array of intervention strategies to effectively plan for and implement programs to meet the needs of this population.

While this workshop series progressed, on-site technical assistance was being delivered at a number of institutions. As individual institutions made a commitment to serve this population and identified personnel to work in developing appropriate programming, Consortium personnel provided training in the ten areas previously described. As with the workshop series, training efforts typically began with administrators, moved on to managers and ended with training for direct service personnel and faculty. It is encouraging to note that more than one-third of the twenty institutions attending the initial workshop indicated an immediate desire for technical assistance to enhance L.D. programming.

Summary

It is a time of growth and change for postsecondary learning disability programming. We can choose to accept the status quo by allowing haphazard development by untrained personnel or we can commit ourselves to a comprehensive

training effort for leadership personnel. There is no doubt, however, that without implementation of comprehensive preservice and inservice efforts we will face the 1990's with efficacy studies which raise serious questions regarding the effectiveness of learning disability college programs.

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Table 1

Projected Competencies of Learning Disability College Leadership Personnel

AREA	COMPETENCIES
ASSESSMENT SKILLS Have competence in understanding the theoretical rationale and practical applications of individual assessment as it relates to learning disabled (LD) college students.	1. To be able to evaluate the psychometric properties and usefulness of assessment instruments. 2. To be able to use evaluation data in diagnosing learning disabilities. 3. To administer standardized tests of intelligence. 4. To interpret standardized tests of intelligence. 5. To administer and interpret standardized tests of academic achievement. 6. To interpret standardized tests of academic achievement. 7. To be able to administer criterion referenced assessments of academic abilities. 8. To be able to interpret criterion referenced assessments. 9. To administer standardized tests of information processing. 10. To interpret standardized tests of information processing. 11. To utilize diagnostic/prescriptive teaching techniques and other informal assessment procedures. 12. To be able to assess social skills and behaviors. 13. To be able to administer and interpret career interest and vocational aptitude tests. 14. To be able to write, with a team, psychoeducational evaluations. 15. To be able to effectively communicate evaluation results with students.

Table 1 (continued)

Projected Competencies of Learning Disability College Leadership Personnel

AREA	COMPETENCIES
AFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS Have competence in understanding and interpreting the affective needs and problems of LD college students.	1. Demonstrate an awareness of behavior theory, modeling, and other related methods of intervention. 2. To be able to identify behaviors that indicate emotional disturbance as either a primary or concommitant disability. 3. To be able to identify appropriate intervention strategies to effectively address lack of social competence as a concommitant problem, and ameliorate inappropriate social relations. 4. To be able to identify behaviors that indicate inappropriate social relations that may interfere with a student's optimal accomplishments.
COGNITIVE INTERVENTIONS Demonstrate competence in understanding the academic demands placed upon LD college students and the learning strategies these learners bring to the academic environment.	1. To be knowledgeable of the academic demands placed upon LD college students. 2. To be knowledgeable of the effects of study skills upon academic success. 3. Understands the implications of various learning theories and their impact upon academic success. 4. Is knowledgeable in the areas of information processing, memory and intelligence. 5. Is knowledgeable in the areas of learning strategies, self-monitoring (metacognition), and problem solving.

Table 1 (continued)

Projected Competencies of Learning Disability College Leadership Personnel

AREA	COMPETENCIES
INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES Demonstrate proficiency in the planning and delivery of instruction to LD college students.	1. To be able to determine student needs and the interventions to meet those needs. 2. To be competent in the use of supportive technology (word processors, computers, texts on tape, etc.) 3. To be able to effectively provide direct instruction in study skills such as notetaking, outlining, and exam taking. 4. To be able to effectively provide direct instruction in learning strategies (Paired Associate Learning, Rehearsal, etc.) 5. To be able to utilize diagnostic prescriptive teaching to plan effective instruction. 6. To be familiar with support services on campus which might be of service to LD students so appropriate referrals might be made. 7. To be able to formulate individual goals and objectives for students. 8. To be able to effectively provide direct instruction in writing, spelling, math, and reading.
COUNSELING/CONSULTATION SKILLS Demonstrate the ability to act in a counseling/consultation role.	1. Can establish and maintain rapport with LD college students. 2. Is able to implement and monitor individual and group counseling sessions. 3. Can appropriately assist with the selection of a major and consequent course of study.

Table 1 (continued)

Projected Competencies of Learning Disability College Leadership Personnel

AREA	COMPETENCIES
COUNSELING/CONSULTATION SKILLS (continued)	4. Is able to knowledgeably assist with formulating career/vocational decisions. 5. Can establish and maintain rapport with college faculty and administration. 6. Is able to implement and monitor individual and group inservice sessions. 7. Is able to consult with advisors relative to the appropriate selection of a major by individual students. 8. Is able to consult with faculty, staff, and administration relative to appropriate modifications of course work or course of study for each student. 9. Can facilitate appropriate curriculum modifications (i.e., lowered course loads, course waivers, and exam modifications).
RESEARCH SKILLS Demonstrate competence in the theory and practice of educational research and program evaluation.	1. Demonstrates knowledge of descriptive and inferential statistics. 2. Demonstrates knowledge of statistical techniques. 3. To be able to apply statistical procedures in educational techniques. 4. Demonstrates knowledge of qualitative and quantitative research procedures. 5. To be able to conduct program evaluations. 6. To be able to do applied research. 7. To be able to read and interpret research findings.

Table 1 (continued)

Projected Competencies of Learning Disability College Leadership Personnel

AREA	COMPETENCIES
MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP SKILLS Demonstrate competence in the overall management of a support service program for LD college students.	1. To be able to work effectively with regional, state, and national organizations directly dealing with LD adults (i.e., rehabilitation services, ACLD, AHSSPPE, etc.) 2. To be knowledgeable of critical learner variables essential for success at your institution. 3. Can implement procedures to meet 504 mandates in postsecondary settings. 4. Is able to design appropriate LD college support services. 5. Is able to implement appropriate LD college support services. 6. Can effectively collaborate with higher education personnel. 7. Can write competitive grant applications. 8. Can manage personnel in a way which encourages productivity and job satisfaction. 9. Can identify, develop, and manage the resources (fiscal, personnel, facilities) for successful program operation. 10. Is able to project a positive image of the program to constituencies within and external to the postsecondary institution. 11. To be knowledgeable of high school special education programs and personnel.

Table 2

Doctoral Training Coursework for L.D. College Leadership Personnel

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ASSESSMENT (at least one course selected from the following):

- Individual Pupil Assessment
- Intellectual Assessment
- Appraisal Procedures in Counseling

LEARNING DISABILITIES (at least three of the following):

- Problems in Special Education: Special Learning Disabilities
- Procedures in Learning Disabilities
- Learning Disabilities Seminar
- Doctoral Seminar on L.D. College Programming

ACADEMIC/COGNITIVE (at least one course selected from the following):

- The Adult Learner
- Improving Adult Life-Skill Competencies
- Theories of Learning and Cognition
- Learning
- Memory and Cognition
- Learning and Related Behavior Processes

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL (at least two courses selected from the following):

- Characteristics of the Emotionally Disturbed
- Educational Procedures with Disturbed Students
- Doctoral Seminar in Emotional Disturbance
- Intervention Strategies for School Psychologists
- Practicum in Intervention Strategies

COUNSELING/CONSULTATION (at least one course selected from the following):

- Principles of Counseling in the Helping Professions
- Consulting
- Principles of Career Development in Counseling
- Counseling: Theory and Practice
- Counseling Intervention

ADMINISTRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION (at least one course selected from the following):

- Introduction to Student Services in Higher Education
- College Student Development
- The Law and Higher Education
- The College Student
- The Community College

RESEARCH/EVALUATION/TECHNOLOGY (at least three courses selected from the following):

- Quantitative Methods I & II
- Methods and Techniques of Educational Research
- Program Evaluation
- Construction of Evaluation Instruments
- Computers in Education